*Theology &*Episode 4: Theology, Race & Education

**Jeff Liou:** Hey, Emily.

**Emily Hill:** Hi, Jeff. How are you?

**Jeff Liou:** Doing okay. Do you ever have those recurring dreams where you show up to school and you're just not prepared?

**Emily Hill:** I do. I do. It's very scary. I am usually show up for class to take an exam and I realized that I've never been to the class before. And I'm like, how am I going to pass this test? Never been to the class or I show up and I can't find the classroom because the whole school is a maze. What about you?

**Jeff Liou:** I've definitely have had those dreams. I am happy to report. They mostly stopped after I graduated in 2017, with was my PhD. Knock on wood.

**Emily Hill:** Yes, they have, they have largely subsided, but I still have some version of them sometimes. So we'll see what happens.

**Jeff Liou:** Education is such an impactful shaping, forming experience in all of our lives. And that's what we were talking about on today's episode. We talked to Clarence La Mont Terry, who is the Associate Professor of Education at Occidental College here in Southern California. Dr. Terry is a former math teacher and a coach, and his research focuses on the creation of critical race counter spaces as an alternative environment for the mathematics education of high school age Black males.

**Emily Hill:** We also talked to Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, and she is a pastor and a theologian. She is a nationally recognized authority on Hispanic Biblical Institutes. Until very recently, she was the Dean of Esperanza College at Eastern University and she now leads a major grant project for the Association for Hispanic Theological Education, a leading organization for Latinx theological education. She's the author of several books, including her most recent *Atando Cabos: Latinx Contributions to Theological Education.*

**Jeff Liou:** What did we learn from them? What, what's one of the things that stuck out to you?

**Emily Hill:** Oh, it was a really illuminating time to just think about the ways in which we typically have learned in this country and what that's like. La Mont talked about the sage on the stage knowledge being something that we acquire from from a lecture or from some kind of expert. That's definitely a way that I have certainly been predominantly shaped.

**Jeff Liou:** As I was listening to him, talk about that it just reminded me so much of what we all do when we attend church and listen to a sermon, I am convicted and challenged by the problems that he outlined of the sage on the stage model, especially in the church. So I hope that some of our pastor friends will give this episode a listen, maybe share it with your pastor if you're listening in, too.

**Emily Hill:** Yeah. And before we get into the episode for our scholars listening, we want to talk about the Emerging Scholars Network who helped sponsor our podcast. The Emerging Scholars Network is a national digital first network of undergraduate and graduate students, post-docs, and early career faculty who are pursuing alternative academic careers.

The Emerging Scholars Network walks alongside aspiring scholars to equip and resource them in following Christ through online platforms, interactive webinars, national connections with mentors and others, in each person's discipline. They're part of InterVarsity and they partner with other communities and collaborate with other partners like the Christian Scholars' Foundation and the Christian Scholars' Review. There's lots of benefits to joining. You can find out more about them on their website, which we will have in our show notes.

**Jeff Liou:** We're glad to bring you this episode with Dr. La Mont Terry and Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier. The question that we ask everyone. Is if you were at a dinner party, how do you describe what you do or what you study and then as a followup to that, tell us why you love it.

Dr. Conde-Frazier, could we start with you? Could you say who you are, where you teach and then if you were at a dinner party, how do you describe what you do?

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** I wouldn't call it a dinner party by the way, Jeff, but that's okay. I'll tell you why in a second. So I work for the Association for Hispanic Theological Education. And the way that I would explain that to people is to say that pastors are pastors because they have a heart to be a pastor, but they need a lot of other knowledge and skills that goes with it. And the work that I do is to make sure that I open up spaces and institutions that can help to provide an education that makes people effective in that work. And usually people get that. The next question they might ask me is why is that important? And I would say because the kind of church that you're going to have depends on the leadership that that church has and that church therefore has the ability to transform a community or not.

And then that leads to furthering the conversation. That's sort of where it goes, but that wouldn't be the first question that someone asks me in my context. The first question that we deal with is, you know, family and where do you come from? And you know, that whole thing. So the question of what I do comes much later, because who you are is more important than what you do.

**Emily Hill:** Yeah. Thanks for that.

**Jeff Liou:** Let me follow up with you. Can you tell us-- maybe this isn't the right way to frame the question-- but why do you love what you do?

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** In part, because of who I am, right? I am a teacher at heart. And so I love issues that deal with education. I see education not as a degree, but education in Latin is *educare*, which means "to bring forth." And the most important part of education is to bring forth who people really are, to bring forth their giftedness and to create spaces for them to become. And that also means that it's a healing piece. Um, there's a healing piece because there've been a lot of forces that come up against people so that they can't become fully who they are. And so when you are teaching, you are doing a lot of different things. You're not just presenting information, you are creating spaces for people to become. You're helping people to sort of be architects of how they see themselves becoming you, you give them resources that they can draw from for that becoming, but then you also have to realize that as someone is becoming, they're going to go back into a world where that becoming is going to get squelched again.

So as a teacher is also your job to deal with structures. And to deal with what it is that keeps people from truly bringing the fullness of who they are created to be in the image of God. And so there's a lot of different aspects to teaching and it's very generating to be with people from, uh, who work at different parts of this along with you, because it's very generative work. It's co-creation. And so it's, it's, there's a lot of passion with it because there's a lot of compassion and compassion is passion. And so you feel the Spirit sort of burning inside of you and that's where the passion comes from. Right? It's very creative. It's very generative work. There's a Psalm that talks about how God blesses the work of our hands. And you really feel that the work of your hands is with the creator. And it's, uh, it's very holy work as well. So you enter into it with great reverence, as well as passion.

**Jeff Liou:** Wow. All of our guests in the season have been faculty and I pray that they feel the Spirit as they do their work and experience the passion that you're talking about.

Dr. Terry, could you answer the same question if you were at a dinner party? How would you describe what you do and why do you love it?

**La Mont Terry:** Yeah. Thank you. So I'm La Mont Terry, I'm an Associate Professor at Occidental College, which is a quote-unquote urban liberal arts college in Los Angeles. What do I do? So I I'm paid to teach.

Right. Um, at a liberal arts college, we focus on closely on student- faculty relationships and building on the basis of that. So that's my primary work is teaching. There's also an expectation that what we teach is informed by our research, right, our scholarship. And so on that side, in short, I focus on pedagogy as an investigation into how to improve the experiences that the students have in K-12 schools. And most of my publications there with the schooling experiences of high school aged Black males, as some of the work that I do deals with mathematics. I'm a, I'm a former middle school math teacher. But in general, I researched the kinds of student-centered pedagogies that respond to students' needs in schools.

Why do I love that? I feel called to be a teacher. Originally came to college, thinking that I wanted to be a doctor, a medical doctor. And I sort of selected that because it made my mom smile when I told her I wanted to be a doctor. And so that worked. And so I liked, you know, helping people feel good about my future. And then I got to chemistry and I thought, oh, wait, I might be in this for the wrong reasons. And so it was right around that time, I guess my sophomore junior year that I realized that I was good at math, but there was something about sort of my own experience in connecting with, with youth in schools that was really fulfilling to me.

And so that naturally led me to becoming a math teacher. And so I've spent the first part of my career teaching math. Eventually that led me back to graduate school and the work that I do now working with undergraduates. But in short, I love working with, with youth. I've always cherished the role of working with youth in and sort of leading them in a way that the results in their own understanding of their own vocation.

**Emily Hill:** Well, I'm really looking forward to continuing our conversation today. La Mont, could you tell us more about your research or your teaching, perhaps in the areas of race and education?

**La Mont Terry:** When I respond to this, I'm going to talk a little bit about sort of what my teaching focus is, and then also some of the research. So if that's okay.

**Emily Hill:** Yeah. Great.

**La Mont Terry:** So as someone who focuses on K-12 schools, the reality is that we can pretty easily predict academic outcomes. That's a broad statement that I think requires some nuancing, but it's also a relatively fair. And then the less race as a predictor is so reliable. In fact that we've got these really powerful narratives that have been shaped around race and academic outcomes.

Right? So I think pretty much everyone's heard about the achievement gap. And so a lot of my work is sort of grounded on the cornerstone of deconstructing the ideas that sort of have gone into the achievement gap. So a standard definition of the achievement gap is to look at the sort of academic disparities between white students on one hand and students of color, most visibly Black and Latinx students on the other. And that definition is problematic for a lot of reasons. A more nuanced definition might be the difference in academic achievement outcomes between some white students and some Asian students on one end. And Black, Latinx and some other Asian students on the other hand, and the nuance there is to recognize that that there's a particular rhetoric in play when we toss out a phrase like the achievement gap. Namely, that that's white supremacy. And so when you look at a lot of the data around the achievement gap, it sort of had its heyday. And I think educators in general, those at state offices of education, politicians, board members, these sorts of things.

They don't really talk explicitly about the achievement gap. It's more implied now, but the rhetorics are, are very much white supremacist. The data, the way it gets constructed is you take the white students outcomes, and then you sort of line those up along with dis-aggregated data for all other racial, ethnic groups alongside. And oftentimes when you see that kind of data, white students are not performing the best. What you have is, is oftentimes Asian students. And this is certainly true in California. Asian students are outperforming white students in mathematics and language. But the rhetoric tends to sort of favor white as normative.

And so it's our responsibility to sort of ask why that's true. The reality is that within sort of the construct of the racial achievement gap, you have racism itself, right? You have assumptions about white normativity, and then you have a failure to acknowledge the model minority myth, right. That's really sort of characterizes and impacts how Asian American students experienced the classrooms.

So a lot of my teaching, the thread that runs through it are these concepts of race, racialization, and ultimately how the way that we understand schools, how they work best tends to favor some students. The other sort of major area, and this sort of pans out in my research is, is culture. And specifically how, how teachers can best respond to the way, the ways that culture is implicated in classrooms. I do a lot of work on the kinds of practices, policies, programs that would respond to the contemporary cultural climate. So some of that is designed to center BIPOC, youth, right? Black, indigenous, people of color, those students as they experienced schools.

But the other side of that coin, which often gets ignored is for white students. Right? So teachers typically when they hear cultural relevance, they're thinking, okay, this is about how to fix Black students, for example, or Latinx students. They don't value education that they're not doing well. So yes, come and help me understand how to fix those students. And the reality is that there's a whole separate conversation about, about the culture of dominance, which I posit is essentially what white culture is.

In the same way that Black folks have lost deep ethnic connections through slavery, and through obviously experience in the United States, and throughout the diaspora, white folks have had a similar experience, but within the seat of power in this place and this in this country. And so how do, if you ask someone who's white, what is your culture and how do you describe it? Right. They struggle to do that. And so one of the ways that I reframe this in my, in my research, as well as in my teaching, is that we have allowed white culture to be the culture of domination. Right? And so there's a whole project or program around helping white teachers learn about the culture of domination.

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** Great stuff, Terry, I hear you speaking. My understanding is that racism was the organizer of colonization. And so we have to go back to what colonization meant and it was about domination. It was about taking your land. It was about taking your resources. It was about making you seem like you were less than who you were, because this way I could take your self determination. So it was about all of those pieces and it has continued to organize itself and to organize society in such a way that dominance can be perpetrated. They can continue to do this, and it is important.

And you made me think of a story about I was teaching course, and this is now teaching at a seminary and your teachings. I was in California in the classroom was varied. And I don't teach out of the usual paradigms and pedagogies of dominance. And so my syllabus looks very different and even where it is and how it is that you do your research is very non-traditional. And so the students, my BIPOC students were like, wow, this is great. You know, it was very generative. It's like they had a space to be themselves, and to draw from resources that they had not been asked to draw from before and so forth. And my white students were enranged because how on earth were they going to get an A? Yes, right.

It's about getting that A. It wasn't about learning, mind you. It was about how are they going to get that A, because they didn't know how to access those different types of resources. It wasn't the way that they were used to learning. I was asking them to learn in very different ways and while it was a variety of ways of learning. Including the traditional, right? Because you have to be inclusive. So including the traditional, but it wasn't like the traditional way of learning was the dominant way of learning in that course. And so we had a moment in which I said, well, let's reflect on this. Where is your anger coming from? Why is it there? What have you been used to? What have you not been used to? Why not? Why haven't these been ways in which they have taught you? Who cheated you out of this, right? Because in reality, if we're living in a society where there's so many other people, white folk are being cheated out of being able to truly be able to function properly in society. And by teaching dominance, we are continuing to teach this function to a, a particular group of persons who are not going to be able to function.

And if we're looking to redeem these pieces, we have to teach them in ways that they can function in a society that represents more of the values of the kingdom of the *basileia*. The other story that comes to me is of a student who came, and this was a course on world religions and dialogue. And we had, we did this course kind of like in seven units and each unit had a goal and so forth, and it's a journey that you're taking people on. So that throughout the journey, they, they gain different or knowledges and skills and see things and see the world differently. So that by the end, they're able to create a model of, you know, what would dialogue, real dialogue look like. And that was what I was supposed to be teaching was this last unit. And when we first did the course, I journey with students from the very first unit all the way so that I would know how to integrate the pieces. So the other professor who was teaching with me is Korean and our TA was African-American. Okay. So now I have a student who comes up to me and says, I want to get into a PhD program. I'm not going to get an A, in this course. And I said, well, why is that? He goes, well, look, who's teaching the course. Okay, look, who's teaching the course.

And I go, yeah. And he says, well, how am I supposed to get an A? I said, you know what you might want to do. And there were other BIPOC students hanging around, like, you know, let's, let's see how this goes. Right. And I said, well, you know what, why don't you turn around and ask your colleagues how they've gotten an A. When the classroom doesn't look like what they're used to. And why should the classroom always look like what you're used to, is the question that you have to ask yourself. And how does that fit within your understanding of social justice? Because this was a school, right? Where from day one, this is, you know, part of the rhetoric, I'm going to say, that you have. How does that fit into that paradigm for you?

What you were saying is we've been socialized into dominance and subjugation and the gospel calls us into having sober judgment, which does away with both of those does away with both of them. Both of those are in an intertwined relationship. You can't get rid of one without getting rid of the other one. They're in this intertwined relationship. We have together created that culture that we're in. We have created those understandings, those images of who we are and the work is to do away with both so that we can embrace together something that's totally different.

**Jeff Liou:** I love that. Elizabeth. And even in the stories that you told, you're describing a pedagogy, that's quite unlike what I've experienced. And I'm wondering if both of you from your contexts, Elizabeth, in the theological academy and La Mont in place like Oxy, can you describe for those of us who perhaps have not been thinking about the pedagogy that has shaped us?

Can you describe what norms we should be looking at or remembering, or perhaps if we have children, what pedagogical norms we should be watching for as our kids are being shaped so that we can think about the kind of future that you're describing now, Elizabeth, and maybe Elizabeth, can we start with you? What are the norms and pedagogy that maybe trouble you, or that we should be paying attention to?

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** Because we're talking about this within a Christian understanding, and we have to understand that Christians were very much a part of colonization. Missionary movements were very much a part of colonization. Theology is a product of its own time and culture. So it reflects the same white nationalism, the same white supremacy that's in society. That theology was brought in to be a part of how we rationalize the whole philosophy of how we did colonization and racism. Theology was brought in to help to create that.

Okay. Um, I have a friend, we talked about this century, like hello now, right? I have a friend who at the age of 14 asked his pastor why he was dark and the pastor also a dark man system. This is a curse from God. Well, he had been taught that particular biblical understanding in his seminary, the Curse of Ham. And so this young man goes through life thinking that he's a cursed. And this is the self-confidence that he has is based on the fact that he's a cursed man and that God placed this curse on him. Right. So we're not talking about, you know, eons ago, we're talking about stuff that still happens and it wasn't until he got to college. Right? And he, so he, so that messed up his relationship with God. Hello. It would mess mine up too. So it wasn't until he got to college and he began to understand through science, you know, genetics and pigmentation, and you know, all of these pieces that he began to realize that's a lie, right?

When that pastor told me was a lie. I pastor loved me, but he told me a lie. And who was it who was it that told him that lie? Okay.

Now theology also shapes pedagogy. if theology is based on particular truth, that can't be moved. Then the way that you teach is indoctrination, because it's this knowledge that saves him, right? So you must teach by way of indoctrination.

And so, I teach that way. And you pick up what I've said and it's gospel, and that's the way it is.

But if you understand that theology is a product of its own time and that it is only an interpretation of the revelation, now, you understand that you have to think about what your receiving. And we have a pedagogy that allows people to do critical reflection on what we have. And we can present different truths and we can ask, we can interrogate them, and we can find out what are the roots of that. And we ask, what are the implications if I live this way, versus if I live this other way? And we asked who has had this experience of God that they would have this particular theology. You see? And then you're going to find out that you have churches that have been holding rallies to arrest people at the border, right.

"Catch an immigrant day." And you have in that same town, churches that have been processing their suffering, and I have a different sense of resilience. And who have no healthcare, so they get up at 5:30 in the morning, but pray for the healing of the people and people get healed, they have miracles because they don't have healthcare. They have God care. In the same town. How do you have such different experiences of God and different theologies and practices?

So, those are the kinds of things that you have to be able to., to ask. And you need pedagogies that permit that. And that permit people to know that you don't always have to end up in a prescribed place in order for this to be orthodox, but that instead you have to be able to teach, to allow the Holy Spirit to come. And you're teaching for discernment, spiritual discernment. And that means that the Spirit is going to lead us to places that we haven't been before.

**Jeff Liou:** May it be so, may it be so. Thank you for that. La Mont, what pedagogical norms are are you looking at or do you want us to look at and how are they at work?

**La Mont Terry:** I think as human beings we carry this deep fundamental assumption that learning is a kind of an acquisition, right? So knowledge is a, is a thing. It can, and is objectified materialized, commodified. And can be manipulated, acquired in accrued. Right? And I think. It's hard to see how this is not tied to the sort of the basic capitalist framework of, of, of the world. Right? And so if our basic assumptions about knowledge are that it's an object that can be acquired, right? You can think of like this notion of intellectual property, right? We, one of the outcomes of that is knowledge is a commodity and therefore it gets defended, and policed, in much the same way that we would police private property. Right? Tons of cases, defending, and carving out the boundaries of, of our intellectual property. So then what kinds of teaching emerges from that that basic assumption? It's not surprising then that the, sort of the primary way that we communicate that we share knowledge is through lecture, right? So the sage on the stage, right?

The, the great depositor, right? Uh, that person deposits information into the empty container of the, of the human brain. I'm the expert on this view, you're the novice, right? I know, you don't. I have acquired, you are acquiring, in a lot of ways. I'm the subject. I'm I'm, I'm the, the one who matters and you are just a collection, as my students, of empty brains, of empty vessels waiting to be deposited into. And so this is, um, Uh, recognized as folks might recognize this as sort of a Freirian analysis, right? Freire is not the only one, but Paulo Freire talks about narration sickness, right? Like the we're telling, right we're telling knowledge, that's teaching through telling. Banking education, right? The banking model. And if I think this is the sort of the normative practice in schools, including institutions of higher ed. The professor stands up and he tells and students receive. And so in a lot of ways, right? Thinking about my colleagues, um, discussions of the students over time who have come angry, right?

So what happens when you challenge that basic approach to teaching and learning? What, students get frustrated? They get angry. They get upset because what they're used to is being told, just tell me what's on the test, tell me, I'll write it down and then I'll regurgitate it for you. So I tend to agree with folks like Freire who would say that, what happens when you imagine the teacher's role in the process of, of sort of encouraging and developing freedom in a society?

And so I think that folks like Freire have gotten it part of it right. And so, as I sort of think about ways to sort of challenge that norm, I think a really interesting and productive starting place is re- centering the student and the classroom, right? So rather than having a syllabus or curriculum, or even my instruction center around me as the expert, I'd much rather center students: their experiences, their knowledge, their goals, the discovery of their calling, right? In, in the creation and development of the syllabus, as well as in instruction. And so, you know, one of the, one of the privileges of being a professor at al college is you, you know, we have the freedom to do that. And so the much more sticky and difficult contexts is, that's not to say that there aren't problems still in higher ed, just because we have freedom to determine what our pedagogy is. But the much stickier problem is what happens at schools, right? What, what that looks like? When teachers don't have academic freedom, they don't have an ability to sort of challenge the regime of high stakes testing. Those are much, that's a much more difficult problem. And I think all the more reason to call folks into that struggle in a way that they're aware of not just pedagogy, but sort of how the pedagogy of domination serves empire, really.

**Emily Hill:** You were kind of getting to this Dr. Terry and I wanted to give Dr. Conde-Frazier a chance to ask a similar question. What would be one way of like recentering your syllabus around students rather than around yourself as a lecture? If you could give another reform that you'd suggest about what is a more culturally responsive way of teaching, a more anti-racist way.

And then Elizabeth, if you could talk about some suggested reforms for theological education, if I could have each of you respond with maybe one final suggestion

**La Mont Terry:** To carry on with the inspiration that you would get from someone like Freire, one of the things that you can do, and this, I think, spans the pipeline, if you will, right, the K-12 and then the higher ed pipeline. So, what does it mean to center students? Well, um, you know, the, the challenge is that, you know, we have training, we have expertise and we have knowledge that, that students don't have, right. To use that acquisition framework, right? So I've spent time acquiring this knowledge in my field and that's valuable to students, but., You know, ultimately the question is, well, what are you going to go on? And what are you going to do with that knowledge? And so one way to sort of think about the classroom or to conceptualize the classroom is rather than, you know, determining the syllabus, it's unit, it's week by week progression. Oftentimes I, I will start the class off asking students what they want to learn about. So they there's a course description. You signed up on the basis of that. Here's a syllabus that I've used in the past, but what do you want to learn and then be ready to listen to what they want. And then what that then requires me to do is to do the kind of planning that integrates what, what it is that I know about my field and the kinds of questions that students are asking about the field to sort of bridge those gaps.

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** I can have a conversation with you Terry all day, because we'd come out of such similar places and so forth. Right. I've done a lot of creating the syllabus with the students kind of thing, but those are the same principles. And to answer Emily's question it's about what are their commitments then? What is it that they would like to see happen differently? How do they want to make a difference as a church? What are the, the values of Christ that they feel that they want to incarnate? Because the gospel is not a special knowledge. If it's a special knowledge that saves me, then we're back to Gnosticism, right? It's modern day Gnosticism. But if we understand that Christ was about the incarnation then it's a very different place that we're in.

And so we have to construct things differently so that they are embodied, so that they are incarnated. And then you're also teaching to create teams of people who bring their gifts together. And that means that I'm not just teaching the person who has the supposedly calling to be the pastor. I'm teaching that pastor along with the lay leaders, because it's about the priesthood of all believers. It's about being the body of Christ. And therefore it's not about --if it's about dominance and the special knowledge, then it makes sense that we licensed people, right? Because they have that special knowledge and we give them, it's about not just grades, but it's about degrees, right? Because now they have that special knowledge and now they could be the expert. Like you're like you were the expert, you know, while you were teaching them a sage on the stage. But if you change that around, then you're teaching so that you can create teams of people that are going to reconstruct what's happening in their communities. And that becomes ministry. And they're doing that according to the vision of the kingdom that they may have, but they have to be able to do that as a body.

And so that's different in terms of who comes to theological education. Who is it for and what is it truly about? The other thing is that we, if we're going to understand the context differently, we have to engage new topics. There are things that are taboo that the church has not wanted to address, and where the church has maintained a dominance around what they think should be the understanding on these particular topics, and there hasn't been the kind of discernment that we need to have. And so you have to engage those new topics in these different ways, and you have to do away, then, with division between church and academy. And so you have to talk to pastors, have to talk to academicians, have to talk to people who are experiencing these pieces. And that's a whole different way of generating an incarnated knowledge.

**Jeff Liou:** I just have to hit pause there because the idea of pastors talking to academics, I'm hoping that some pastors will listen to this. And I know that there's going to be academics in those congregations. So I love that idea. I just wanted to put that out there.

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** So right now in the Latino community, part of what's happening is that bishops of the church are crying out for their academic people. They're saying, where are our scholars? We need our scholars. So we recognize that scholars play an important role in the community, but scholars have to have the recognize that they have, that they have a grammar and a language that is not relevant to the community. And they have to be, we have to be able to come together and speak a common language and learn each other's languages, in a sense, so that we can have a real dialogue. But we also have to understand that this has to come from the experiences of real people suffering, and we'll all have a different sense of how it is that ministry needs to take place. It will just open up all of the paradigms and we'll have a different understanding of these pieces.

And lastly, if we do this as a team of people together, right? Part of what the dominance piece does, is it isolates a group of people from being in community. Now, if you have a theology where even Trinity is hierarchy, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, then you can't, you can't have that. But if you have an understanding of Trinity, that is the *perichoresis* the dance between these, the inter-dependence between these, this, this Godhead, right? The three in this Godhead. If you have that understanding, then you're going to have an understanding that a pastor's not somebody that you placed on a pedestal and isolate, and therefore that person is going to be a great candidate for burnout. And if you're a candidate for burnout, your a candidate for whatever it is, that is your particular weakness. Right? And then when that happens, we kick you to the curb and you're no good anymore. Or we make believe that that hasn't happened and we still haven't healed. But if you're doing this as a community, we can't burn out.

**Jeff Liou:** So let me ask the last question I had, and there's just so, so much that we could be talking about, but Elizabeth, you've taken us there already. There's a different vision of the Trinity, which funds some of the values that we're talking about and La Mont you introduced an idea of reorienting the classroom around the student and her community. Can I get both of you to briefly or as long as you want talk about the spiritual and faith emphases that drive this reoriented vision of pedagogy and learning that both of you are talking about. What are the parts of your own faith and spirituality that are maybe at the front of your mind or deep in your history that are informing how you're approaching pedagogy and learning?

**La Mont Terry:** That's a wonderful question. The notion of freedom is, is, uh, is key, right? So I came to faith, I would say largely in part to the community I had access to at Occidental College as an undergraduate. And so I had a really wonderful time there, lots of fundamental growth and development, access to multiple communities of faith there. But so between InterVarsity and other sort of church groups or traditions, and it was really wonderful. And I think now as a seasoned that back, uh, in the, in the position of a teacher, a professor, the question that I think about most often is how do I use the power that I have institutionally to help facilitate freedom that students have?

I think at various points in our conversation, we've talked about this notion of reforming. And I think the, the most radical element of educators right now, might be perceived as radical, are... really have really abandoned the notion that that schools, for example, can ever play any substantive role in the liberation of people.

And so you have folks who are looking to abolition as a driving concept for re-imagining what what schools can be. And so that is a deep conversation. It's powerful. It's, it's hard to fathom. Uh, I can't say that I fully get it. Conceptually, I get it. Conceptually and practically I know that school is responsible for, it's one of the main drivers of domination in our society. And so when I think about the spiritual realities of our world, my, I feel my calling is to, to try to as, as best as possible, right this, I'm loving this conversation about the incarnation, right? We are the body of Christ to try to, to enact the desire and the goal of freedom for my students, to the extent that they're participating in my classes. That they see freedom as their goal.

I think one of the powerful things about InterVarsity is that you all are constantly inviting me, encouraging me, challenging me to think about the ways in which my commitments to Christ are interwoven and in dialogue with my, my professional work. And so if I had to put a button on, it definitely it's taking the freedom that I have in Christ across all the aspects of my lived experience on this planet, setting that forward, and trying to sort of bend the arc of my classroom and even the arc of the institution towards freedom. But also being willing to sit with the tension and the reality that that might be a failed project that we might not ever understand a way to sufficiently reform school, such that it can yield the kinds of things that we think go with freedom. And so there's a tension there that I need to be sitting in that tension. Uh, I think really at the end of the day, it makes me look to other spaces.

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** I mean, there are two things that have been important in how I shaped these pieces today. One is that we are created in the image of God. And that's exactly why we have, we should need, we need to have the freedom. We need to have freedom so that we can, we can fully become who we were created to be in the image of God. And that's important, not only to me personally, not only on the personal level, but that's important on the level of what is the will of God for all of us to come to that point. So that then together, who we see each other as being and what we understand needs to be the, the world that we create together. The kingdom of God has not only up in heaven some place, but the kingdom of God is in our midst. And so what is it that we understand is that vision?

And it's hard to come to that vision when we're coming to it from places of woundedness. And so if we continue to create places of woundedness, it's going to be very hard to come to that place. But if we do have the freedom that La Mont speaking about to be fully who we were created in the image of God, then in that understanding, we can come to another vision. Right? So that's important.

And then the other piece is that we are a community of the Spirit. That we can't do this on our own. That we need the Holy Spirit to take us there. That it is God who takes the initiative through the work of the Holy Spirit in us to take us there. And so what does it mean to be a community of the Spirit? And this is why I understand that we need to have teams of persons. And that those teams are created in order to be, uh, spaces, communities, where we practice allowing each other to live into that freedom as messy as that is at times. Right? But where we can practice them, and where in that practice, we can begin to bring some healing to one another, because when you have a wound that's been healed, that's where wisdom can come.

So those are other spaces for us. And to become a community of the Spirit with the understanding of the Trinity that I just explained, then it's about reciprocity. It's about interdependence. It's about cooperation. It's about collaboration, and it's about co-creation. And so that is the ultimate place where we would like to be able to come and then to create the beloved community.

**Emily Hill:** Well, thank you both so much. I have learned so much from this conversation. Thank you for bringing your gifts to our community. I hope it challenges and brings new ideas to our listeners so that we can all become the best humans that we were created to be. So thank you so much, Dr. Conde-Frazier and Dr. Terry for being with us.

**La Mont Terry:** Thank you for having us.

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** Thank you. And I've truly enjoyed the conversation. La Mont, it's been great to get to know you as well.

**La Mont Terry:** Likewise.